

#ThinkLanguages Week
Think Global Act Local

Language Activities for Primary Schools

Visiting a primary school as part of #ThinkLanguages is a unique opportunity to share your enthusiasm for languages while gaining valuable experience in planning and leading activities. A short visit can leave a lasting impression, showing younger pupils that learning another language is fun, achievable, and something to look forward to in secondary school.



Before you go, a little preparation will help everything run smoothly

- **Check with your language teacher first.** They can support your idea and help you contact a local primary school.
- **Obtain approval from your own school and then contact the primary school.** Arrange a preparatory visit to meet the principal and class teacher and explain your plan and the activities you hope to deliver.
- **Talk to the teacher to learn about the class.** Find out the pupils' age, class size, and whether they have any previous language experience.
- **Share your activity ideas with the class teacher.** They can advise on which activities will work best for their pupils.
- **Agree practical details.** Confirm the date, time, and length of your visit. Most sessions last between 20 and 30 minutes, so plan either one longer activity or two shorter ones that fit into the time available.
- **Keep activities simple and fun.** You are a language learner too, so having perfect grammar is not the focus. What matters most is providing a clear, enjoyable activity that encourages pupils to participate.

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Remember you do not need to come up with every idea on your own

There are many places you can look for inspiration:

- **Your language teacher:** They are often the best starting point, as they can suggest activities suited to your target language and class group.
- **Online resource pages:** [Languages Connect Primary Module Resources](#), and [Scoilnet Supports for Primary Schools](#) provide free or easy-to-use classroom games, vocabulary-building activities, and printable materials.
- **You can adapt ideas from your own experience:** simple songs, vocabulary games, or group challenges often transfer well into another language.
- **Everyday items** found in the home, classroom objects, or even food packaging can be a source of inspiration providing simple and engaging ways to introduce new words.

If you are finding it hard to decide what to do, the next section includes a set of tried-and-tested ideas that other TY students have already used successfully in primary classrooms. They are easy to prepare, fun to deliver, and engaging for pupils. Each activity focuses on a small amount of new vocabulary, so you can concentrate on building confidence and keeping the enjoyment level high for the pupils. Choose one or two activities that appeal to you, adapt them for your class and remember – your main goal is to show pupils that learning a language is fun, achievable and for everyone.

Activity 1 Fruit Salad Frenzy

You will need

A selection of 'fruit cards' simple pictures of everyday fruit, illustrating the vocabulary you want to teach e.g. pictures of:

- An apple
- A banana
- An orange
- A strawberry



What to do

1. This is a '*circle game*', so first, with the class teacher's permission, ask the pupils to move their chairs into one big circle in the centre of the classroom and then to sit down on their chairs. (The pupils may need to move one or two of the desks to facilitate this).
2. Introduce 4–5 fruit words using picture cards illustrating the words you want to teach.
3. Write the words on the whiteboard to help the children remember them.
4. Next, assign a fruit '*name*' to each child sitting in the circle.
5. When you call out their fruit in the chosen target language, those pupils swap seats, e.g. when you call "apple", only the pupils with that '*name*' swap seats.
6. You can then try calling two fruits together, or example "orange and banana" in your target language. If you call "Fruit Salad!", everyone changes places at the same time.

Useful words

French: Pomme (apple), orange (orange), banane (banana), fraise (strawberry)

Spanish: Manzana (apple), naranja (orange), plátano (banana), fresa (strawberry)

Italian: Mela (apple), arancia (orange), banana (banana), fragola (strawberry)

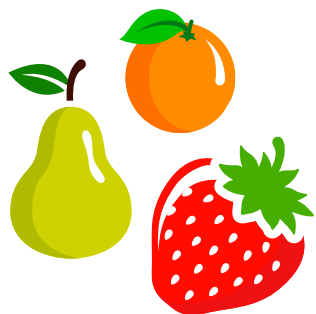
German: Apfel (apple), Orange (orange), Banane (banana), Erdbeere (strawberry)

Tip for success

Demonstrate clearly before beginning. Remind pupils to walk, not run, when moving from or switching their seats to ensure everyone's safety.

Extension Activity

If you have a little more time you can extend the activity by playing the game again, this time adding a few extra fruit words. You can use additional picture cards or write the new words on the board with a simple drawing to help pupils connect the word with the fruit.



Activity 2 Borrowed Words Bingo

You will need

- A whiteboard marker
- A sheet of plain paper for every child in the class
- Pupils will need a pencil



What to do

1. Begin by explaining that English has borrowed many words from a wide variety of languages over time—including not just European languages like French, Spanish, Italian, and German, but also languages from further afield, such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and others. This means pupils already know more words from different languages around the world than they might expect, giving them a real head start when they begin to learn a new language.
2. Share a few familiar examples, such as café, pizza, chocolate, or sushi, to illustrate this point.
3. Tell the class that today they will be learning some words in just one of these languages (the one you have chosen). Ask pupils if they can think of any other English words that may have come from that language. Write their suggestions on the board so everyone can see them. While you will focus on one language during the activity, sample word lists for French, Italian, Spanish, and German are provided below to guide you.
4. Give each pupil a sheet of paper and ask them to draw a 3x3 grid (similar to the grid for X's and O's). Together, compile a list of familiar '*borrowed*' words. Pupils then choose nine of these words to write or draw in their grid. You call out the words in the target language, and pupils mark them off if they appear on their grid. The first to complete a line calls out "Bingo!"

Tip for success

Pronounce each word clearly in the target language and emphasise the connections to English. Pupils will quickly see that they already '*speak*' more of the language than they thought, which builds confidence and excitement for further learning.

Extension Activity

If you have more time, you can extend the activity by playing the game again. This time, for an extra challenge, the children can draw a 4 x 4 grid on the back of their page and add a different selection of words to their Bingo Card.



Useful words

French: Café, croissant, menu, ballet, chauffeur, chef, cuisine, gâteau, brioche, brie, eau de toilette, boutique, déjà vu, collage, champagne, façade, souvenir, garage, brochure, cinema, matinée, omelette, éclair, mousse, rouge, limousine, genre, décor, espionnage, camouflage, cul de sac, route, police

Spanish: Olé, chocolate, churro, chihuahua, patio, tomate (tomato), vainilla (vanilla), mosquito, guitarra (guitar), siesta, fiesta, salsa, tango, poncho, sombrero, cargo, tornado, cafetería, armada, embargo, bonanza, rodeo, adobe, plaza, tapas, flamenco, aficionadoz

Italian: Pizza, pasta, spaghetti, opera, cappuccino, espresso, mozzarella, scenario, violin, vendetta, piano, graffiti, tiramisù, broccoli, zucchini, ravioli, confetti, soprano, mezzo, trio, maestro, fiasco, studio, novella, casino, influenza, gondola

German: Kindergarten, rucksack, angst, hamburger, noodle, quartz, wanderlust, blitz, dachshund, dobermann, rotweiller, pretzel, strudel, delicatessen, poltergeist, wunderkind, gesundheit, lager, fest, glockenspiel, spritz, diesel, kaput, zeitgeist, doppelgänger, sauerkraut, frankfurter, Volkswagen

Chinese: Ketchup (from Cantonese '*keh jap*' meaning tomato sauce) Gung-ho (from Mandarin '*gōng hé*', meaning '*work together*') Typhoon (from Cantonese '*tai fung*' or Mandarin '*táifēng*', meaning '*great wind*') Tofu (from Mandarin '*dòufu*') Dim sum (from Cantonese '*dím sām*')

Japanese: Tsunami (harbor wave), Karaoke (empty orchestra), Anime (animation), Emoji, Sushi, Tycoon (from '*taikun*', meaning '*great lord*') Samurai, Ninja, Kimono, Haiku

Arabic: Alcohol (from '*al-kuhl*'), Sugar (from '*sukkar*'), Coffee (from '*qahwa*'), Cotton (from '*qutn*'), Sofa (from '*juffa*'), Jar (from '*jarra*'), Safari (from '*safar*' meaning journey), Zero (from '*sifr*')

Activity 3 Traffic Lights & Colour Dash

You will need

- A large area in which to play e.g. the P.E. Hall or the school playground.
- Large, coloured cards (A4 sized) or P.E. cones in green, orange and red.
- Additional cards, cones or items in the target colours will be required for the extension activity (10 green, 10 red, 10 orange).



What to do

Explain to the pupils that you are going to teach the names of the colours in your chosen language. First introduce the words for red, orange, and green in your target language using the coloured cards or cones to help the children connect each new word to the correct colour. Ask the pupils to move freely around the P.E. Hall or playground, following your instructions:

Green = Go/Jog

Orange = Move in slow motion

Red = Stop/Freeze

1. Begin by demonstrating in English to ensure everyone understands
2. Then switch to giving all commands in the target language while also showing the coloured card or cone to help the pupils understanding
3. Once the pupils appear to understand the words, give the commands using the target language only.

Useful words

French: Vert (green), orange (orange), rouge (red)

Spanish: Verde (green), naranja (orange), rojo (red)

Italian: Verde (green), arancione (orange), rosso (red)

German: Grün (green), orange (orange), rot (red)

Tip for success

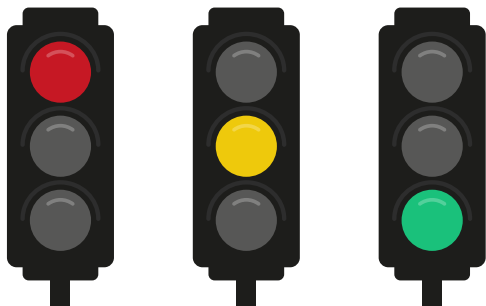
Keep the game engaging by linking each colour to different actions, such as hopping, tiptoeing, or dancing. This adds variety and helps pupils remember the vocabulary through movement.

Extension Activity

If you have a little more time you can extend your activity by including a colour relay race. You will need an equal number of red, orange, and green cards, cones, or objects (at least ten of each so that every pupil has a turn). Scatter the items around the area.

1. Divide the class into three teams: Red, Orange, and Green.
2. Line up each team at one end of the space.
3. Explain that when it is their turn, each player runs to find one item in their team's colour and brings it back.
4. As soon as they return, the next player sets off.
5. The first team to collect all their coloured items is the winner.

To reinforce the vocabulary, call out the colours in the target language during the race (e.g. rouge, vert, orange in French).



Activity 4 Do and Freeze! Action Commands

You will need

- No additional resources for the main activity.
- Optional (for the extension activity): a phone with a short playlist of age-appropriate songs and, if permitted, a small Bluetooth speaker. Always confirm with the class teacher in advance that music can be used in the lesson.



What to do

Ask pupils to stand up and push in their chairs so they have space at their desks. Choose 6–7 simple actions that can be carried out safely while standing in place (see suggestions below). Teach each action with a clear gesture, then give the instructions in the target language. Pupils copy you as you say the words. Vary the order and pace to keep the class engaged.

Suggested classroom-friendly actions:

- March on the spot
- Jump on the spot
- Turn around
- Wave (say hello)
- Hands up (raise your hands)
- Hands down (lower your hands)
- Nod your head

Tip for success

Start with two or three actions, then gradually add more. Once the class is confident, invite a pupil to lead a round.

Extension Activity

If you have a little more time you can extend the activity by creating a dance routine and rap using the actions the pupils have already learned. Play upbeat music and combine three or four actions into a short dance routine, chanting the target-language words for each action like a rhythm or rap. Practise together, then perform it as a class to end the session with energy.

Useful words

French: Marchez (march), sautez (jump), tournez (turn), saluez (wave/hello), levez les mains (hands up), baissez les mains (hands down), hochez la tête (nod)

Spanish: Marcha (march), salta (jump), gira (turn), saluda (wave/hello), manos arriba (hands up), manos abajo (hands down), asiente (nod)

Italian: Marcia (march), salta (jump), gira (turn), saluta (wave/hello), mani su (hands up), mani giù (hands down), annuisci (nod)

German: Marschier (march), spring (jump), dreh dich (turn), winkt (wave/hello), Hände hoch (hands up), Hände runter (hands down), nickt (nod)

